

The Baptism of Our Lord



Trinity United Church of Christ

60 East High Street

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325

717-334-7266

tuccgburg@gmail.com

www.gettysburgtrinityucc.org

Trinity United Church of Christ

January 12, 2025

8AM and 10:30AM Worship

Baptism of the Lord

First Sunday following Epiphany

*Awakening joyful service guided
by our still speaking God!*

**indicates please stand as you are able*

Bold print indicates congregational response

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TIME OF SHARING/GREETING

PRELUDE MUSIC – “Shall We Gather at the River” – *J. Raney*

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

The voice of God resounds upon the water.

The Spirit of the Lord hovers over the stream.

The Son of God is named, “Beloved.”

And all who worship shout out, “Glory!”

Ascribe to the Lord majesty and strength.

Let us worship God in holy Splendor.

***HYMN #407 “How Firm a Foundation”**

***PRAYER**

Holy God, when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan the heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and your voice affirmed your love in Jesus for the healing of the human race and all creation. By water and word you lovingly invite us into the same life-giving mission.

May your Spirit moving like a stream of water flowing from its source, work in us this day to realize your vision of a world made new in Christ. Amen.

RESPONSE TO PRAYER #163 “Many are the Lightbeams”

Many are the light-beams from the one light.

Our one light is Jesus.

Many are the light-beams from the one light; we are one in Christ.

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We are precious in your sight, yet we often forget that we are your beloved. We confess that our love is fickle and inconsistent. We follow selfish goals and deny that your way of life harms others and hurts your world. We are sorry and we want to change. Create in us a clean heart, strengthen our resolve, and reconcile us one to another, and bless us with your peace. Amen.

MOMENT FOR SILENT reflection

KYRIE #750

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

ANTHEM (10:30)

“The Prayer with Lead Us, Lord”

Words and Music by C. B. Sager and David Foster

Senior Choir

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Isiah 43:1-7

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

SERMON

PRAYER/LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN #290 “Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart”

(Remain Seated)

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

*CELEBRATION OF OUR GIFTS

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE #15 "Go Tell it on the Mountain"**
Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

O God, at his baptism, you acknowledged Jesus as your beloved Son, and through him you opened to us a way to become your children by grace. May these gifts we return to you be a sign of our dedication to live as your faithful children. Amen.

***HYMN #351 "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry"**

***FINAL BLESSING**

***POSTLUDE MUSIC**

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Elements from today's worship have been adapted from the following resources:
Feasting on the Word: Worship Companion. Kimberly Bracken Long, Editor.
Westminster John Knox Press. Kentucky. 2012.
Affirmation of Faith

The Rev. Dr. Amanda Burr is a United Methodist elder appointed to
United Methodist Church of Palm Springs, California.

Worship Elements:

PRELUDE: *Shall We Gather At the River.* Music by Robert Lowry. Arranged by
Joel Raney. ©2019 Lorenz Publishing Co

HYMNS: *How Firm a Foundation.* Early United States melody. Word Alterations
©1992 The Pilgrim Press

Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart. Public Domain.

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ANTHEM: *The Prayer with Lead Us, Lord.* Text and Tune by Carole Bayer Sager
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Today's Worship Participants

Rev. Dr. Frederick A. Young		Pastor
Cindy Blevins	8:00am	Lay Liturgists
Lenore O'Rourke	10:30am	
Sara Shank		Organist/Acting Choir Director
Mark Luckenbaugh		Percussion
Sonny Coble	8:00am	Ushers
M. Jane Alleman	10:30am	
Mary Jane & Harry Hilbert	10:30am	Greeters
Buck Harvey	10:30am	Acolyte
Georgia Hollabaugh, Kara Young, Luke Milhimes,		Tech Team
Russell Bailey, Carl Barrick, Suhua Dong, Stacey Rushwald, George Steckert, Garrison Redding, Terry Krietz, Nina Redding, Cindy Kidd		

How Firm a Foundation

“K” in John Rippon’s *Selection of Hymns*, 1787; alt.

1. How firm a foun-da-tion for you has been laid,
by God in the Word, in the sac-ri-fice paid!
What more can God say than to you has been said,
to you, who for ref-uge to Je-sus have fled?
2. “Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dis-mayed,
for I am your God, I will still give you aid;
I’ll strength-en you, help you, and cause you to stand
up-held by my gra-cious, om-ni-po-tent hand.”
3. “When through the deep wa-ters I call you to go,
the riv-ers of woe shall not o-ver you flow;
For I will be with you, your trou-bles to bless,
de-liv-er-ing you from your deep-est dis-tress.”
4. “When through fi-ery tri-als your path-way shall lie,
my grace all-suf-fi-cient shall be your sup-ply;
the flame shall not hurt you; for I have de-signed
your soul to make pure just as gold is re-fined.”
5. “The soul that on Je-sus has leaned for re-pose,
I will not, I will not de-sert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should en-deav-or to shake,
I’ll nev-er, no nev-er, no nev-er for-sake!”

Isa. 43:2–5; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 13:5

Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart

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George Croly, 1854; alt.

1. Spir-it of God, de-scend up-on my heart;
wean it from earth, through all its puls-es move;
Stoop to my weak-ness, might-y as you are,
and make me love you as I ought to love.
2. I ask no dream, no proph-et ec-sta-sies,
no sud-den rend-ing of the veil of clay,
No an-gel vis-i-tant, no o-pening skies;
but take the dim-ness of my soul a-way.
3. Have you not bid us love you ev-ery way?
All, all your own: soul, heart, and strength, and mind;
I see your cross—there teach my heart to stay:
O let me seek you, and O let me find.
4. Teach me to feel that you are al-ways nigh;
teach me the strug-gles of the soul to bear,
To check the ris-ing doubt, the reb-el sigh;
teach me the pa-tience of un-an-swered prayer.
5. Teach me to love you as your an-gels love,
one ho-ly pas-sion fill-ing all my frame;
The bap-tism of the heaven-de-scend-ed dove,
my heart an al-tar, and your love the flame.

Gal. 5:25; Matt. 22:37; John 1:32

1. I was there to hear your born-ing cry,
I'll be there when you are old.
I re-joiced the day you were bap-tized,
to see your life un-fold.
I was there when you were but a child,
with a faith to suit you well;
I'll be there in case you wan-der off
and find where de-mons dwell.
2. When you found the won-der of the Word,
I was there to cheer you on;
You were raised to praise the liv-ing God,
to whom you now be-long.
Should you find some-one to share your time
and you join your hearts as one,
I'll be there to make your vers-es rhyme
from dusk till ris-ing sun.
3. In the mid-dle a-ges of your life,
not too old, no long-er young,
I'll be there to guide you through the night,
com-plete what I've be-gun.
When the eve-ning gent-ly clos-es in
and you shut your wea-ry eyes,
I'll be there as I have al-ways been
with just one more sur-prise.
4. I was there to hear your born-ing cry,
I'll be there when you are old.
I re-joiced the day you were bap-tized,
to see your life un-fold.

Trinity United Church of Christ
Gettysburg, PA

Baptism of Christ
1st Sunday following Epiphany

January 12, 2025



Sermon

Isaiah 43:1-7
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Rev. Dr. Frederick A. Young
Pastor

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The cleansing, renewing waters of baptism link us to creation and our creator. They stream around us and through us, binding us together as a family of believers. The prophet, Isaiah announces that humanity is claimed by God, each one of us. This is where our sense of community begins; to know and to understand that God calls us. We are beckoned toward the realm of God.

God calls people in a multitude of ways. John the Baptist's message was one of preparation; repentance and claiming through the sacrament of baptism. He spoke to a people in need all along the Jordan River. This muddy body of water where many began lives of faith to follow a man they were still hoping for. Rumors and stories and the words of John preceded Jesus to the banks of the river.

My reading for this week gave me an opportunity to consider a different aspect of Christ's baptism, community. John called out to anyone who would listen, and invited them to come, be cleansed and forever changed. No matter how personal or individualized, calling is

always fleshed out in the community. Like John, Isaiah did not speak to one person, but called together the whole nation of Israel.

*But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, **O Israel:** Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*

Isaiah 43:1

The urgency in the Baptist's plea was not the ranting of one camel hair wearing, bug and honey eating man's insanity, but the result of the times and the way that those in power were impacting the lives of John's community. And so, this wild man shouted, "Be washed clean and remember, our God has your back!" John's clarity drew a response from the crowd, one of questioning and curiosity and maybe hope-filled anticipation; "Is this the one we have been waiting for?" But John is quick to tell them, his role is to announce the long-awaited one.

John and the riverbank community remind us that we all have roles to play. Jesus, John, the early followers, and us. God has woven us together so the sum of us is so much more than the parts. There are hidden truths that are only revealed when we come together as a community willing to listen, learn, and change.

When I was on a European trip in college, we ended our three-week tour by spending several days on the island of Iceland. A beautiful country full of majesty, cultural mysteries and ancient tribal traditions. Icelanders believe that water, in all its forms, is sacred. Much of their theology centers on religious practices utilizing the cleansing, restoring powers of water. The oldest book of law in Iceland, the *Gragas*, instructs that if you are not in the presence of clergy or fresh water, anyone has the ability to draw three crosses in the snow, or look out over the ocean, and deem, "I consecrate you, water." Reading this reminded me of the incredible glaciers and being surrounded by the sea ice that covered a good portion of the Arctic. The small island is a place with water always in sight. The community gathers, declares the nearest water holy and the one to be baptized is forever blessed and claimed.

On the other side of the world, there is a small drought ridden town in Mexico's Sonoran Desert, where the neighborhood pool has three functions. It is a water reservoir for the local community, gathering rain for planting, cooking, and bathing; it is the town's swimming pool, where the community's children cool off and have fun;

and on Sundays it serves as the church's baptismal font. Brazilian theologian, Claudio Carvalhaes says, "this community's practice embodies baptism as a communal manifestation of God that disrupts structural sins and draws people together in new ways, uniting Christians in cosmic and sacramental relationship with the earth".

Baptisms often take place away from the decorative fonts, outside our traditional sanctuaries. It is the water that is sacred, the community that is imperative. Embracing this truth brings our religious rites and rituals full circle. In Iceland 30 years ago, I had no idea those bathing in the natural hot springs were hoping to receive healing. Perhaps some were even being baptized. I remember showering with that same hot water, piped from the springs to our hotel. That water stank of sulfur, and the scent lingered on my skin for days. Now I realize it was the smell of redemption.

John stood in the muddy Jordan offering hope and healing to his hurting community. The children of the Sonoran Desert splash and play in the same waters where they were baptized, probably unaware that every time they step into the sacred water, they are not only refreshed,

but restored in their relationship with God. The Icelanders view water not only as a source of nourishment, but as a source of their Creator's touch. I will never look at baptism in the same way again. I can't wait for the next opportunity to bless another with the healing waters of Christ.

Our ancestors in faith remind us that God came in human form to be with all of creation. Baptism is communal. Jesus' baptism took place among the people. Not a private celebration. Christ was baptized by John into a new social world, a world we continue to be baptized into today. As a believer is blessed, the body of faith grows. We need each other, our lives and our church are strengthened when we share our faith. The blessed water, in its many forms connects us, cleanses us, sustains us, and draws us closer to Christ. Like Jesus, **You** too, are God's Beloved; with **You**, God is well pleased! Amen.